

Grandson of first lighthouse keeper replies

Dear Editor

I refer to your excellent insert to the March issue, the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Centenary and would like to make some comments.

My paternal grandfather, George Fredrick William Stevens spent his first 16 years living in Victorian lighthouses with his parents and became as proficient as any keeper in the various duties. In particular he was a very capable semaphore and Morse operator, which launched his career in communications.

He entered the Victorian Lighthouse service on 1st May 1889 and served at Split Point (Airey's Inlet) from July 1893 and Cape Nelson from October 1896 as assistant keeper.

Then in June 1899 was appointed acting senior keeper at Gellibrand. He was first appointed to the Point Lonsdale Light in 8th July 1900 as senior assistant and in 14th January 1903 was appointed as light keeper. He was again appointed to Lonsdale in 1920 for two years and retired in 1923.

During the next 20 years he did occasional relieving in various Victorian lights as keepers took service leave. He died in 1944.

Your photograph with the caption "George Stevens" may well be a man of that name. But certainly is not

that of my grandfather the light keeper. This can be seen from the studio photograph here of my granddad taken in about 1890.

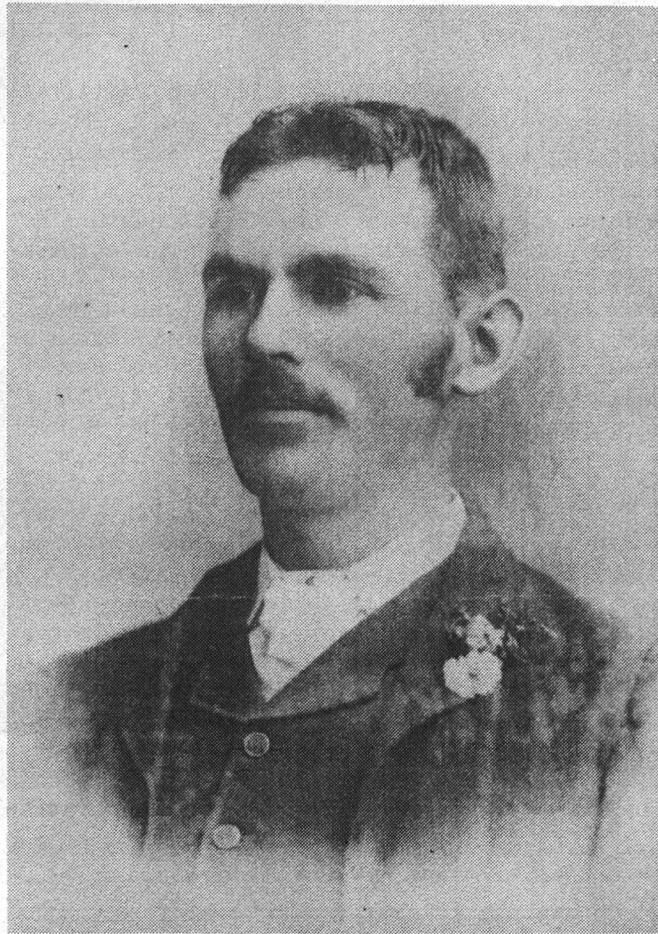
In retirement grandad and grandma lived in a house called Samaria on the main road to Point Lonsdale until his death in 1944. He eked out his pension by selling home-grown vegetables to the locals and tourists and by trapping rabbits each evening. The rabbit flesh was food for the table and the pelts he sold in Geelong each month.

To fertilise the sandy soil in his garden at Point Lonsdale, grandad dragged tons of kelp from the beach over the years and dug it into his vegie patch.

As testament to the effectiveness of this fertiliser, I have a photo taken in 1929 of my brother aged five standing alongside a bean plant with three huge beans, two of which are almost as long as my brother was tall - possibly one metre.

I can recall as a small boy sitting on the front beach on Christmas Day 1939 when the terrible bushfires were raging in Victoria, completely surrounded in thick smoke listening to the lighthouse fog horn sounding its warning to shipping.

Earlier I can remember travelling with my dad from Port Melbourne to Queens-



George Frederick William Stevens, lighthouse keeper Victorian lights 1889 through to 1923. Born Belfast Island, (Port Fairy) on 6th March 1866 to father William Stevens, lighthouse keeper Port Fairy and mother Susan. Died 4th November 1944. Buried Point Lonsdale cemetery.

liff by paddle steamer *Weeroona* and then walking with my little suitcase with change of clothes, bucket and spade and teddy bear to Samarai at the Point for a

holiday. Hope you have found the foregoing of some interest.

**George W. Stevens
Vincentia, NSW.**